




**STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
DIVISION OF MENTAL RETARDATION SERVICES
ANDREW JACKSON BUILDING, 15th FLOOR
500 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243**

July 28, 2005

MEMORANDUM

TO: Agencies Providing Personal Assistance

FROM: Stephen H. Norris
Deputy Commissioner 

SUBJECT: Assessing Safety in Private Homes Where Personal Assistance is Provided

Many of you have expressed concern about health and safety conditions in some homes in which you've been asked to provide personal assistance to an individual served by the Division of Mental Retardation Services. As a result, we have adopted and included as a requirement in our Provider Manual an assessment instrument (enclosed) similar to the one used for waiver providers of personal assistance to individuals who are elderly.

The assessment is to be completed by the personal assistance agency during the first visit to a private home when acceptance of a referral is being considered. If any item is not met, the agency will notify the DMRS regional office referral source. DMRS pays only for accessibility modifications, so the cost to resolve safety issues that are not related to accessibility is the family's responsibility. However, the region may be able to assist the family in resolving the safety issue(s) through information and access to other resources. If the health or safety issue is significant, the agency may delay instituting services until the necessary corrections are made.

For personal assistance services already being provided, the personal assistance agency needs to complete the checklist as soon as possible on each home to assess its safety according to these standards. If issues are identified and the family requires assistance to resolve them, the agency should notify the regional office.

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In instances when conditions in a home present very significant risk to the health and safety of the individual served or the personal assistant, and those conditions are not resolved, it may be necessary to discontinue the service and seek other options for the individual.

We have also enclosed a letter to family members that you may provide when explaining the assessment. It contains a contact person should they have questions or concerns about this requirement.

We hope that use of the checklist will improve conditions for both the people we serve and your staff. If you have any questions, please contact Brian Dion at 615-532-5756.

SHN/bdc

Enclosures

Cc: Larry Latham, DMRS
Donna Allen, DMRS
Brian Dion, DMRS
Paula McHenry, DMRS
Regional Directors
Independent Support Coordination Agency Directors